

From Amerigo to America: 2012 Italy Culture Month To Celebrate the Legacy of Vespucci

Francesca Giuliani (August 01, 2012)



“Amerigo to America: the Legacy of Italians in the Americas” is the title chosen by the Italian Heritage & Culture Committee of New York for this year's Italy Culture Month. Events and symposia will start in September and go through December, paving the way for the official start of the 2013 celebrations for the “Year of the Italian Culture in the United States.” President of the IH&CC NY Joseph Sciamme tells i-Italy about the initiative.

The 2012 Italy Culture Month organized by the Italian Heritage and Cultural Committee of New York will open on October 5 with the traditional inaugural ceremony by the Mother Italy statue at [Hunter College](#) [2]’s Poses Park.



The theme for the 36th edition of the initiative focuses on the role of Italian explorer [Amerigo Vespucci](#) [3], on the 500th anniversary of his passing.

America owes its name to Italian explorer and adventurer Amerigo Vespucci.

Born in Florence in 1454, Vespucci arrived here in 1497, five years after Christopher Columbus did, but he was the first to realize this was not a part of Asia, rather a “New World.”

His ingenuity and will to discover offer an inspiration to reflect on the Italian inborn creativity and drive, and on the ways it actually affected life in the Americas, both northern and southern.

The contribution of the Italian immigrants to the development of the USA as we know them is very important, but what is less known is that Italians also had a primary role in the growth of southern American countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela.

“Amerigo to America: the Legacy of Italians in the Americas” is the title chosen by the IH&C Committee of New York, that is currently in the midst of finalizing the programs and the activities for the celebration.

Events and symposia will start in September and go through December, paving the way for the official start of the 2013 celebrations for the “[Year of the Italian Culture in the United States](#) [4].”

Joseph Sciame, President of the IH&CC New York, is thrilled for this year’s Italy Culture Month.

“It will be a very exciting time,” Sciame tells i-Italy while showing the 2012 poster for the initiative by artist John Battista De Santis, representing Vespucci’s astrolabe surrounded by all the fields in which the theme of “discovery” will be examined in the events and symposia: from technology to medicine, from engineering to business.

“The emphasis we decided to put on science and technology is to demonstrate that there is more about Italy than monuments and fine art from past times. Italy is a protagonist of today’s world and has an active role in the advancement and in the progress of it.”

Sciame elaborates on some of the events in program: “Something very exciting will happen on a national level. An artist has offered to create a sculpture in honor of the 500th anniversary of Vespucci’s death and the IH&CC New York will present it in October to the [Embassy of Italy](#) [5] to Washington DC, where it will be then placed. It’s going to be fantastic.”

Another important event will take place on September 29: “It will be a co-sponsored symposium with the [Calandra Italian/American Institute](#) [6] on the life of Joseph Tusiani.”

Renowned poet, essayist, and translator, Tusiani has often composed poems in Latin, truly bringing the Italian classical tradition into American English and American literature. “Tusiani has also been selected as our 2012 Da Vinci awardee,” Sciame adds.

As already mentioned, the connection with South America is going to be a very important one in this year’s edition of the Italian Cultural Month. Sciame unveils that on this aspect, the Committee is “working closely with Ambassador Sebastiano Fulci from the [Organization of the American States](#) [7],” an important institution attached to the United Nations.

The legacy of Amerigo Vespucci, his will to discover and always go further, is very characteristic of the Italian mindset and has infiltrated the American society in ways that have shaped it very deeply. “It’s the spirit of Italians,” Sciame believes.

“When I think about my grandparents coming to America from the mountainous inlands of Sicily, sometimes I wonder how they ever did that! There is tremendous genius, talent and creativity in the Italian people, and I think we Italian-Americans inherited that gene, the same gene that is responsible for Vespucci’s accomplishments. Our strength is our vitality!”



For more information and for a complete program of the Italian Cultural Month, visit the Italian Heritage and Culture Committee's [website](#) [8].

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- [2] <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/>
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- [4] <http://www.i-italy.org/20391/2013-year-italian-culture-united-states>
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